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137. The need for modifying the existing rules for the election of Members to the Sri Mulam Popular Assembly.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

Mr. S. N. Krishna Iyer, B. A. & B. L. (Member, T. I. C., Trivandrum) said that the object of the Government in calling the Assembly into existence, as was declared by them in para 6 of the Proceedings No. P. 640, dated the 1st October 1904, was solely to give the people an opportunity of bringing to the notice of the Government their requirements, wishes and grievances on the one hand, and on the other, to make the policy and measures of the Government better known to the people so that all possible grounds of misconception in regard to the action of the Government might be removed. He then examined the statistics to show how far that object had been fulfilled. In the first session the Members came in by nomination by the Dewan Peishkars and the different communities were fairly represented. Out of 74 Taluk Members 19 were Brahmins (11 Tamil and 8 Malayala Brahmins), 7 Christians, 24 Nairs, 3 Ealavas and 6 Mahomedans.

The principle of election was affirmed before the second session and rules were framed for the election of the Members. Under those rules the Members from the second to the sixth sessions came in. Taking the taluk elections alone for purposes of comparison, he said that the following results had been obtained, *viz.*—

Session No.	Taluk Members.	Brahmins.	Christians.	Nairs.	Ealavas.	Mahomedans.
2nd	66	12	13	31	0	0
3rd	66	10	11	32	0	1
4th	66	5	11	44	0	0
5th	66	6	12	39	1	1
6th	66	6	8	44	0	0

It would be observed that the Ealavas and the Mahomedans thus found no chance of coming in as Members but the other communities were fairly represented by the taluk elections.

Before the seventh session the election rules were again revised and the following material changes introduced in respect of the qualifications of voters:—

(1) The provision that "only a person who pays *on his own account* an annual land revenue of Rs. 50" was modified into "every person who pays on his own account or on *account of his tarwad or family* an annual land revenue of not less than Rs. 50".

(2) If tax was paid in the names of several persons as joint holders of land, a majority of the adult male persons among such joint holders might nominate one of them to be their representative.

(3) If tax was paid in the name of a woman, the senior male member of the family should be entered on the electoral list as her representative.

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(4) To the provision that "every graduate of a recognised University is entitled to vote" was added the condition that he should have "not less than 10 years' standing".

In the seventh, eighth and ninth sessions, the Taluk Members were elected under the revised rules and the results were as shown below :—

Session No.	Taluk Members.	Brahmins.	Christians.	Nairs.	Elavas.	Mahomedans.
7th	42	1	6	29	0	0
8th	43	2	8	26	0	1
9th	43	0	4	30	0	0

The effect of the new rules was that, of the remaining three communities, the Christians and the Brahmins were also thrown out. The Christians therefore complained to the Government that there was over-representation of a single community and the Member added that the same feeling was shared by the other two communities also. The Government themselves, in a way, realised the undesirable results of the elections, and with a view to obviate thedisproportion, the number of nominations was gradually raised from 10 to 22 and special G. O.'s came to be issued allowing 6 of the nominations to the Christians, 6 to the Ealavas, and 3 to the Mahomedans. To mitigate the disadvantages, the Member proposed the following modifications to the election rules for the consideration of the Government :—

(*a*) All the four changes made in the election rules in 1910 in respect of the qualifications of the voters and noted *supra* should be dropped and the old position restored.

With regard to change No. 1 noted above, he said that the joint and undivided family system of the Nair community helped them to reap the full benefit of the modification to the comparative disadvantage of the other communities. In the case of the latter the property of the acquirer was always partitioned soon after his death, and by such a process of disintegration, the right of voting and being elected was being lost by several families. In his opinion, the indivisibility of property should not give a predominence to one class over another in political organisations like the Assembly.

With regard to change No. 2, he said that there was no justification for the rule. It meant practically that several disqualified persons could, if they had a common patta, nominate any one of them as a qualified person. He questioned the soundness of the principle and hence pleaded for the abrogation of the rule.

With regard to change No. 3, it was true that a woman was not qualified to vote, being a woman. But the principle of allowing another to represent her would encourage benamee transactions. He was not therefore in favour of allowing a substituted vote in such cases

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Change No. 4 would work hardships among all the communities, especially among the Ealavas and the Mahomedans, who were otherwise unable to come in by election.

(*b*) His second suggestion was to create special electorates for the Tamil Brahmins, Mahomedans and the Ealavas. He did not propose a special electorate for the Christians, because he believed that their right to a fair representation in the Assembly would not be affected if his first suggestion was adopted. He proposed six Members being elected from each of the three communities under the special electorates, which should be over and above their right to vote in the regular electorate, as was allowed in the Legislative Council elections in British India.

Dewan.—Why do you propose the special electorates for the Brahmins, Ealavas and Mahomedans alone?

Member.—Because only they have now come forward asking for it.

Dewan.—If the Christians ask for a special electorate, would you allow it?

Member.—If the modifications I have suggested are adopted, that will give a fair representation to the Christians. If, after giving it one or two years' trial, the system is found not to work well, it may be dropped.

Dewan.—Why not give the revised rules a trial for one or two more years? Your point is that, after the changes you propose are effected, there will be sufficient representation of the Brahmins, Ealavas and Mahomedans. Suppose the Christian says that, notwithstanding those changes, the Christians will not have proper representation. Should not that be deferred to?

Member.—If the Government see reason for it, a special electorate must be given to the Christians also.

Dewan.—If the Pulayas ask, should they also be given?

Member.—The Pulayas are not now sufficiently advanced in education.

Dewan.—But suppose the Pulayas say that they are backward because they are not sufficiently represented in the Assembly and ask for the privilege. Can it be given?

Members.—They are not educationally forward now.

Dewan—You propose a general electorate and a special electorate. Will not the Nairs ask for a special electorate for themselves?

Member.—All that will depend upon the results of the elections.

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Dewan.—What I want you to face is the contingency that may sooner or later occur, *viz.*, that when once you give a special electorate to one community, it will have to be given to practically every community that asks for it. What do you say to that?

Member.—We do not find that as a result of so many years' working in British India. It is difficult to make a prediction like that. My proposal is based on my experience of the past nine years. Now, we find that, in spite of the original rules and in spite of the modifications made, one community is alone prominently represented. Judging from the past experience, a special electorate is warranted in the case of the three communities I have named. But it may be given to the Christians also, if the need for it is established.

Dewan.—If special electorates are to be given to four out of the five communities, why not candidly say that the old system will not work and allow special electorates straight on to all the communities?

Member.—I think that will work better and it will eventually come to that.

Dewan.—Do you not think that that will handicap the progress of the country?

Member.—It all depends on the experience we have had. If we find a real predominence of a single community, in spite of the educational advancement of other communities, that cannot perhaps be helped.

Dewan.—Would not all this bring about a contingency, at any rate in some future time, when these communities, which are now to some extent relying upon one another, would want the interests of each community to be represented by one from that particular community? Would it be good to stereotype that state of affairs? Is it expedient for the Government to say once for all that each community should trust to itself alone?

Member.—Even now a Member for the Planters is elected from that community. We think that to be all right.

Dewan.—The Planters represent an *interest* and not a particular *caste*. The Trading Classes, for instance, could be represented by a Nair, Brahmin or an Ealava?

Member.—All that cannot be helped. The present situation is such. In spite of a very fair trial for the last eight years, I am very sorry to say that the election rules have not worked well at all.

Dewan.—Have not the special electorates, such as the Trading Classes and the T. I. C.'s, brought in a certain number of those communities which have been suffering in the other way. How many Brahmin Members have you in the present session?

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Member.—In a very small way. But it does not set right the proportion. We have, I think, 8 or 9 Brahmin Members this time, including the four Malayala Brahmins.

Dewan.—We have 9 Brahmin Members; that works out to 10 per cent. Is the Brahmin population more than 10 per cent of the total population?

Member.—We cannot go upon the population.

Dewan.—When you propose the special electorates, am I to understand that you would go otherwise than upon the basis of population?

Member.—Upon population and other bases as well.

The Member then continued and said that his third suggestion was—

(*c*) to reduce the number of elected Members from 43 to 33, cancelling the privilege of certain favoured taluks to elect two Members. Of those 10 taluks, 7 deputed one Member each from the T. I. C.'s and the remaining 3 taluks were likely to have T. I. C.'s in the near future, so that even those taluks would practically have two Members each. He pointed out that the decrease in number would not affect the material advantages to be derived by the Assembly and would remove the unequal treatment now shown to a few taluks.

(*d*) He also proposed that the number of nominations might very well be reduced from 22 to 10, as there would be no necessity for extraordinary nominations after the creation of the special electorates.

He would leave undisturbed the other special electorates under the existing rules, such as the Planters, Jenmies, Trading Classes and Town Improvement Committees. According to his proposals, the total number of Members would come to 86, instead of 90, and providing for the 4 new Town Improvement Committees also, the number would be the same as it was at present, *viz.*, 90.

Dewan's reply.—Noted.

138. The desirability of returning a Christian Member for the Popular Assembly from Minachil every year.

Mr. K. T. Thommen Mappila (Member, Nominated) said that he fully appreciated the policy of the Government in allowing six Government nominations to the Christians; but the present method of nomination did not produce the full desired effect. A major portion of the Travancore Christians were Roman Catholic Syrians and hence the majority of nominations ought to be from among them. It was essential for the various important sections of the Christians to have their own representatives to put forward their grievances. He said that the population of the Minachil taluk consisted mainly of Roman Catholic Syrians. He therefore requested that one Catholic Syrian should be nominated every year from the Minachil taluk.

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